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ABSTRACT

Many who believe in the value of the study of the humanities are faced with the problems of how to attract vocational students to humanities courses, maintain their interest in such courses so that they fulfill the general education requirements for graduation, and, if possible, generate an ongoing interest in the humanities. In response to these problems, two humanities courses have been developed and implemented at Chemeketa Community College (CCC). One course, "Oceans," seeks to place its subject within a broad social, economic, political, historical, and ecological context and to help students relate the subject to their personal development. The other course, "Literature for Technicians," was designed to generate enthusiasm for literature and to provide vicarious experience with people and problems to be faced in life and on the job. The major barriers to be overcome in designing the course were students' poor experience with general education, lack of writing and information-gathering skills, and low regard for literature and the humanities. Input from faculty and students was used to design the course, in which readings are thought provoking, educational and easily related to the student's life; the classroom environment is relaxing and unpressured; and homework is kept to a minimum. Emphasis is placed on lifelong learning and on a complete technical education, interweaving the technical, the scientific, and the humanities. (HB)

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THE HUMANITIES AND OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

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The ideal of education is to develop the whole person as a worker, a citizen, and active and positive participant in life and society, a parent, --- and on and on. One of my most respected instructors said that the purpose of the humanities is as follows: Man lives from the cradle to the grave; if by studying the humanities I can make one portion of a person's life more enjoyable and less miserable --- I have done my job. This also sums up my belief in the value of the study of the humanities.

The problem seems to be --- how do we attract the students to our humanities courses? Why do they drop out? Why do they complete the technical/vocational or occupational curriculums yet do not graduate because they lack the general education courses required for graduation.

A few years ago the American College Test representative presented his program to our college staff. One extremely interesting overhead projection was the student interest chart. From this chart, one realizes that if one is to develop an interest in a humanities course, one must work to develop connections and tie-ins to the interest areas of the student.

Since that time I have been fortunate enough to develop and instruct two classes geared toward interests of the occupational student. One course is Oceans, a spin-off of the Courses by Newspaper offering. The

other course is Literature for the Technician, a non-transfer course truly designed for technical students.

> Oceans: The sea is the focus of this course designed to explore the relationship of Oregonians to the ocean. Subjects related to the sea --- art, music, literature, myth, superstition, language, resources, politics, war, people, science, economics, technology, oceanography, water, beach, sky, fish, mammals, ecology, pollution, plate tectonics, exploration, histor, wildlife --- all are woven together in a practical, mind expanding, current course of study.

Guest lecturers are fellow staff members, both occupational and lower division transfer instructors. The students learn to relate all these subjects to each other so as to realize the relationship of courses in college and experiences in life as related to their personal development as human beings.

> Literature for the Technician: Meet interesting characters, share experiences, gain technical knowledge, become aware of your world and yourself as you taste life from the turn of the century to today through paperback novels, short stories, essays, poems, and plays. Gain insight and respect for the technical aspects and craftsmanship of writing. Expand your knowledge of the world, other people, and yourself, as you relax in the world of literature.

Most technical staff members at Chemeketa concur that no modern tech-

nical education can be complete without a background of the technical, the scientific, and the humanities interwoven in a practical, useful manner. Literature serves as the best vehicle to provide a touch of humanities into the occupational programs --- if such a course is presented so as to fit the needs of the students. The Literature for Technicians course strives to relate to the student's interests, the job, technology, and people.

Lit for Techs was developed in conjunction with other vocational/technical instructors. This non-transfer course balls up the course with a minimum of loose ends in one quarter. The selections, presentations, and course work relate to the students' curriculum, job, life, and future. The purpose of each segment of the course and each activity is emphasized so that value and usefulness of literature to the student is accentuated.

The course targets on the needs of the average technical student at Chemeketa. This person scores at the 33 percentile on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, is approximately 27 years old, attends classes and labs for a total of 25 hours per week and works at an outside job, sees technology as a solution to almost all the world's ills, respects quality craftsmanship and artisans, has little desire to work or "waste time" on any homework not related to the occupational choice, reads mostly for information that is technical and practical or necessary at that time, has had poor experiences with general education courses such as high school English/literature/social studies (especially when presented by the team teaching approach), lacks memorization skills, and has a poor outlook towards those required non-technical courses.

Few students have library research or information gathering skills, any background in poetry, experience in writing research papers, or respect for literature. The average student stereotypes English/literature courses as feminine in nature and pictures the literature instructor as an alienated man (philosophically, not in gender) whose sole purpose is to use the humanities to attack the technologies. The vocational/technical instructors also share these traits and qualities reflected in their students; since the student leans heavily on the advice and counseling of those vocational/technical instructors, the student is further biased against the humanities courses and instructors.

With the student as the focus point, Literature for Technicians was developed in conjunction with the vocational/technical instructors and modified with feedback from students. An assignment sheet was developed so that the students knew the requirements of the course. The class was designed to fulfill the following: to vicariously experience those problems and people yet to be faced in life and on the job; to generate enthusiasm for literature, especially for the future; and to make the class a relaxing experience, especially when compared to the stress and rigorous requirements of the technical courses.

Texts were selected which are reasonably priced, readily available paperbacks that the student will mark for later referral to important passages. The readings are thought provoking, educational, and easily related to the student's life with great emphasis placed on future family obligations for better and more diviersified education.

The atmosphere of the class was designed to be relaxing. Homework now is kept to a minimum and take-home exams are used. The lecture-discussion method seems the best method with the instructor responsible for bringing in outside background materials.

The retention of a cooperative working atmosphere of the instructor with the vocational/technical instructors was and is a must. Scheduling was and continues to be a stumbling block. Electives cannot be truly electives when only one course is scheduled for the time that the student has free to sign up for that desired class; however, tight schedules caused by limited lab facilities and student's work schedules hinder solution to this problem.

Summary:

The changing pattern of curriculum, of graduation requirements, student interests, budget limitations, etc., provides opportunities as well as stumbling blocks. Attitudes change over a short period of time. New problems are rising as the prestige of the degree and graduation decrease; employers are now encouraging students to emphasize the technical courses and to enter the job market sooner. One of our responsibilities certainly must be to encourage life-long learning, especially in the humanities. Again, the technical/vocational staff concurs that no modern technical education is complete without a background of the technical, the scientific, and the humanities interwoven in a practical, useful manner. Encourage such thought and statements openly; but most of all, constantly remind

yourself that the humanities are important and generate at least a spark of respect in them with each instructor and student.

Thank you.

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